

# **Replacement of Rainbow Trout with Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Private Pond Near Cherry Creek, Tributary to the Big Hole River.**

## **DECISION NOTICE**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Region Three, Bozeman  
June 2008**

### **Proposed Action**

Cherry Creek harbors an unhybridized population of westslope cutthroat trout. A man-made pond located on private ground surrounded by National Forest lands is permitted for, and currently contains, rainbow trout. The outlet of this pond drains into Cherry Creek. Because rainbow trout can hybridize with westslope cutthroat trout and because hybridization is one of the main threats to cutthroat trout conservation, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) with the cooperation of the landowner is proposing to remove the trout from the pond using mechanical means (i.e., gillnetting, seining and electrofishing). Removed rainbow trout will be donated to the local food bank. Once the rainbow trout are removed from the pond, it will be restocked with between 100 and 200 unhybridized westslope cutthroat trout from the Washoe Park Hatchery in Anaconda. The private pond license will be modified to allow only westslope cutthroat trout stocking in the future. There is no planned public access to the pond once the project is completed.

### **Montana Environmental Policy Act**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP in May of 2008. FWP cutthroat specialists and FWP legal department reviewed the document prior to proceeding with the decision notice. Because of the non-controversial nature of the project and the limited potential for impact to public resources, it was determined that no public comment period was required.

### **Decision**

Based on the Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to select Preferred Alternative: removal of rainbow trout with mechanical means and replacing them with unhybridized westslope cutthroat trout from Washoe Park Hatchery in Anaconda to protect the population of unhybridized westslope cutthroat trout in Cherry Creek. I find there are very minimal impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project.

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Patrick J. Flowers  
Region Three Supervisor

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